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TUESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 31, 1916.

O. HENRY'S START.

Prof. Alphonso Smith of the University of Virginia has been looking up the career of O. Henry, the great short story writer. It has always been known that this brilliant author's record contained mystery, supposed to be more or less discreditable, but few persons have known anything definite about it. Prof. Smith has written an "O. Henry Biography", in which he tells the plain truth. And it is worth telling, not because it drags forth the scandal connected with a man of letters, but because it shows how the writer turned his own disgrace to good account, using it literally as a stepping stone to success.

The plain truth is that William Sidney Porter, known by his pen-name of O. Henry, served three years in the state penitentiary at Columbus, Ohio, for embezzlement. There is no question of the embezzlement, as a legal fact. The offenses occurred in 1894-5, when Porter was paying and receiving teller of a small bank in Austin, Texas. The real criminality of his acts, however, seems open to question.

It was a queer sort of bank, run so loosely that patrons used to go behind the counter and help themselves to money, leaving memoranda of their helpings—if they happened to think of it. Porter's predecessor and successor both got into trouble. It was perhaps inevitable that Porter himself, with his constitutional carelessness and disregard of the value of money, should have done likewise. He was arrested and convicted in 1898. The foreman of the grand jury and the foreman of the trial jury that convicted him both said afterward that they regretted their action.

Anyhow, Porter went to the penitentiary. He had written in a desultory way for newspapers, but had never attempted serious writing. His prison job was that of a druggist clerk. It left him leisure and gave him an ambition to write. He began scribbling stories which he sent to a New Orleans friend, who in turn sent them to magazines. From the first he was successful. By the time he left the penitentiary, he had a reputation. He went to New York, and for the rest of his rather short life found a ready sale for everything he wrote or promised to write.

Prison has broken many a man. It made O. Henry. Not that it "reformed" him. Perhaps he didn't need reforming. He had never meant to do wrong. To such a man ordinary moral codes hardly apply. In most of the affairs of life he was a child. Only in one thing he was great—in understanding people and loving them and putting them into stories. Prison made him a literary artist.

CHANCE FOR AMERICAN SINGERS.

The manager of the Metropolitan Opera House is worrying about the threatened scarcity of European singers. Some of the operatic stars are fighting in the trenches. Some are afraid to brave the perils of the sea. Altogether, the star market is becoming extremely limited. In another year, says Mr. Gatti-Casazza, it may be impossible to get enough foreign talent for our operatic stage.

It doesn't seem to have occurred to this distinguished impresario that in that event the gap might be filled with American talent. It might really be a blessing in disguise if the war should cut off the foreign supply of tenors, sopranos and contraltos altogether. Thrown upon our own resources, we should go ahead and develop a native opera, just as when deprived of German aniline dyes we proceeded to create a dye industry of our own.

There's no evidence that America can't do as well in the arts as in industry, when once we abandon the paralyzing delusion that foreign talent is superior to our own by the mere virtue of its being foreign.

"EASY" AMERICANS.

A reader clips these items from a copy of the London Daily Mail:

"For selling a tie bearing the description, 'One gent's tie, Dublin-made, sixpence,' which, it was said, was not made in Ireland at all, the manager of Messrs. F. W. Woolworth & Co., Ltd., Dublin, was yesterday fined 10 pounds."

"For selling Canadian bacon with a guarantee that it was English, Jonathan Varty & Co., Ltd., were at Bristol yesterday fined 20 pounds with 21 pounds, 10 shillings costs."

"For allowing a shop light to throw a 60-foot beam across the roadway yesterday, Charles Spurling, tailor,

High Street, Shoreditch, was fined 15 pounds at Old Street yesterday."

And the reader asks: "What would have been done with such offenders in an American city? It is safe to say, nothing." Even if we had definite, well known laws prohibiting such offenses, the ordinary American citizen would wink at the breach of them. "Oh, well," he'd say, "it isn't worth troubling about."

That shows the difference, remarks the reader, between the Englishman and the American. We're too easy-going. We allow ourselves to be imposed on. "The Englishman, on the contrary, is always standing up for his rights and for a square deal all round, and if he doesn't get it he takes time to make trouble for and secure the punishment of those who in any way defraud him or offend him; and in this he is promptly seconded by the courts."

It's a just criticism. It was such English "standing up for one's rights" that made our revolutionary forefathers revolt against England. But we've lost much of that spirit, to our own great disadvantage.

OFFICE BOYS.

Business men lament the scarcity of office boys. It's a new phenomenon, said to be caused by the prosperity wave which enables parents to keep their boys in school instead of sending them out to hustle for a living.

If this is the true explanation, and it probably is, the public can view the situation with equanimity. It is desirable to have an adequate supply of office boys, but it's still more desirable to have a supply of boys equipped with enough book learning to give them a good start in life.

There's much to be said for the training that a bright youngster gets in a business institution, through exacting routine duties and contact with hustling men of affairs. And thousands of successful business men today look back with pride and satisfaction to their office-boy beginning. But the self-made system's a gamble, at best. For one untaught office-boy who rides to wealth and distinction there are many that remain at a mediocre level, or succumb to the temptations that beset a lad of unformed character.

It's fairer for the boy and safer for the community to let him get a little more age and growth and a little more book learning under his hat before turning him loose to work his way. Then, if he has the stuff in him, he'll make good all the quicker.

A college graduate took a job a few years ago as office boy in the Cleveland headquarters of a big corporation. He took it because he wanted to work for that corporation, and it was the only job there was open. The other office boys—mere kids—guyed him and played jokes on him. They are still office boys, and he is now head of a big department.

FATIGUE.

Fatigue as an economic factor is being investigated by Dr. Robert Oleson of the Federal Bureau of Public Health. The experiments are being conducted in several cities of Wisconsin and are part of a general study of the conditions surrounding working women. In a recent address before a class in public nursing, Dr. Oleson made public some of the facts unearthed.

One of these discoveries is that more time is lost in gossip among women workers in a ten-hour day than in an eight-hour day. This simply means that the power of concentration upon the work in hand becomes less under the continued strain of one long day after another. It has usually been found by experience with men workers that production is actually greater in an eight-hour day than in one of ten hours. Fatigue is in both cases, of course, the determining element.

Another discovery—or rather pair of them—is that the most productive hour of the working day is from ten to eleven in the morning, and the least productive is the last hour of the day's work. A sort of "warming-up" process has been going on for the first two hours, giving the worker a maximum efficiency as her mind and muscles become habituated to her tasks, before fatigue toxins have had a chance to form and begin poisoning her system and reducing her power.

Dr. Oleson wants to see a "factory mother" established in every industrial concern. He wants this woman to be a graduate nurse with the proper social outlook, able to advise men as well as girls. Frequently, he says, a girl, by resting a short period in a quiet room under the nurse's advice and care, could return to her job and finish the day's work. In most places if she feels ill, either she stays at work to the injury both of her task and her permanent health condition, or she goes home, where the conditions are not favorable. She is not helped and her day is lost.

It is about time that the human body should come in for serious study as an industrial factor. Expensive machinery is watched, oiled, tended with the greatest care, while the delicately adjusted organism which is responsible for the output of the machine has been disregarded. The powers of any worker can be surprisingly increased by intelligent care, and with the effect of giving greater comfort and happiness to the worker as well as greater efficiency to the work.

MEGAPHONE PRAYERS.

At a big political meeting in Chicago the speech-making was opened with prayer, in a way that left no doubt about the prayer. According to the news report, the Rev. Timothy Stone called out the prayer through a megaphone. That the petition so rendered was acceptable to the audience may be gathered from the fact that as he finished, "there came a shout of 'Good boy!' from the end of the hall."

A perfectly appropriate shout, too. Why shouldn't there be shouts of approval from the "amen corner" of a political meeting, especially in response to megaphone prayers.



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War Summary

In a vigorous counter attack, launched with huge effectiveness, the Germans facing the French south of the

Somme river in France, have been able to recapture parts of their former trenches north of Le Maisonnette and in the region of Biaches. In addition 112 Frenchmen were made prisoner by the Germans.

To the north of the river, however,

both the French and the British succeeded in advancing their lines. While in the Dobrudja region of Rumania, the Teutonic allies are keeping up their advance on the Transylvania front; the Rumanians are still fighting hard in the Prahova valley and the Jiu valley, where fresh gains have been made by them. In the Rotherthurn pass region Berlin re-

ports a new success for the Austro-Germans, but admits that southwest of the Szurdok Pass the Rumanians have forced the Austro-German columns to fall back.

In massed formation the Russians in Volhynia to the west of Pustanyty again endeavored to break the Teutonic lines, only again to be defeated with heavy casualties, according to Berlin.

Said the boys in the Smoking Room:
"Lucky Dog!"

Friend No. 9708

Said the man on the floor: "Lucky Dogs!"
(Then after the dance he too smoked that fragrant Presado Blend.)

TOM KEENE
the cigar with that Presado Blend

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